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# M MITTEN'S COUSINS



No. 948

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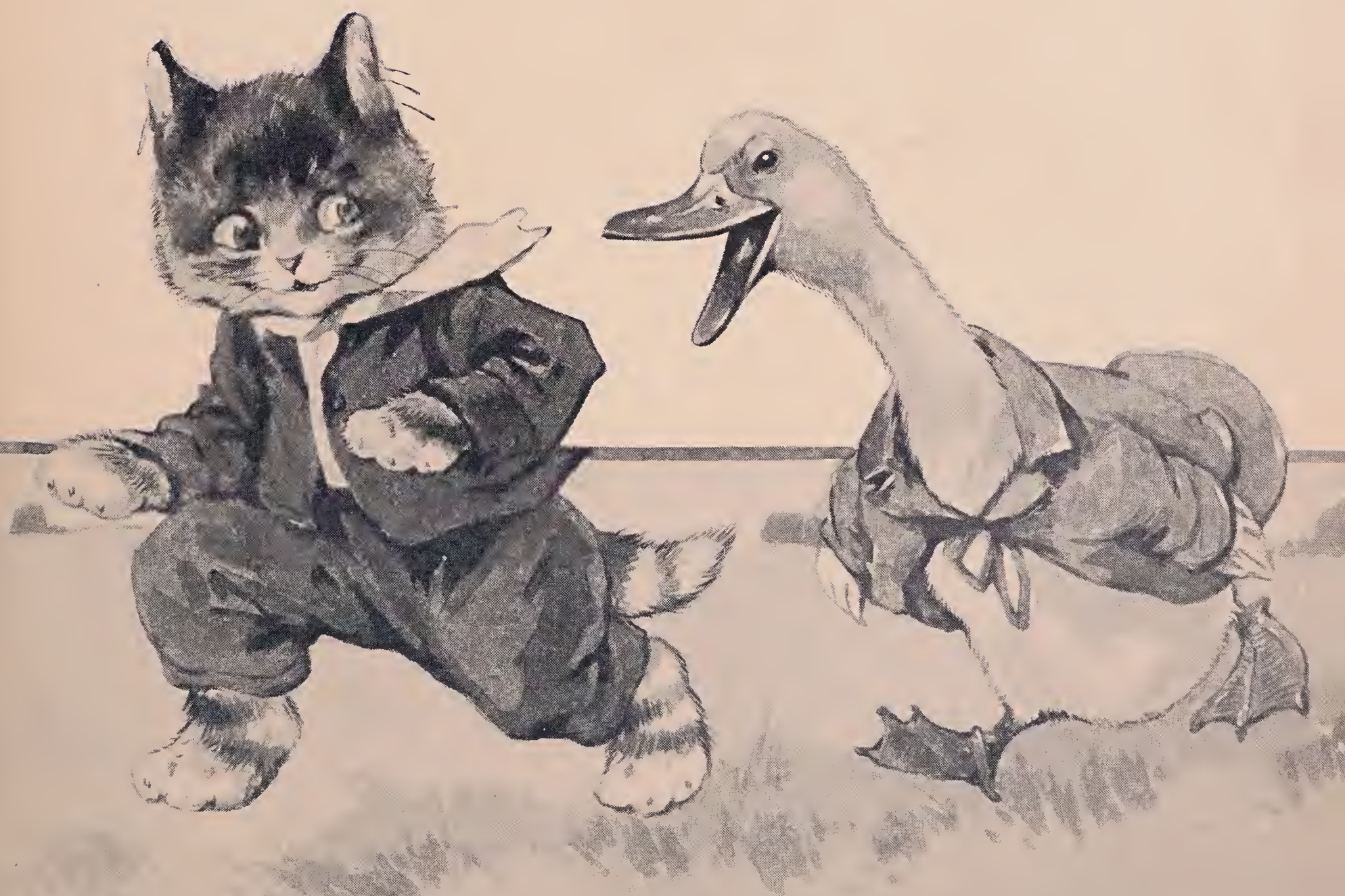


THIS BOOK  
BELONGS TO

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“Here Sonny,” said Mr. Greycoat, the postman, as he handed Tom Mitten a letter. “Take this in to your mother. Mind,—don’t lose it.”





Tom had stopped chasing his tail long enough to take the letter from the postman's hand. It was a pretty little envelope and had a sweet smell.

"There must be something nice in this," thought Tom, as he took it in to his mother, and Mrs. Mitten was all a flutter as she tore it open and read the letter.

"My dear," she said to her son Thomas, "we are to have company."





“Your aunt and cousins from the city will arrive this very afternoon to make us a little visit.”

“It is a long time since I have seen sister Tabitha and we will have a nice long talk while you play with your cousins.”





Come, I must dress you first and then I must hurry and make some muffins for tea."

Thomas, who preferred his own dear little fur coat to any of the uncomfortable clothes he sometimes had to wear, did not seem a bit pleased at this idea.





He was even naughty enough to scold and scratch when his mother washed his neck and ears.

"I hate company," he grumbled, "girls anyway. What fun are they? They are afraid of caterpillars and they can't do anything but just walk around and cry if you touch them."





"Tut! Tut!" said his mother, "that is not a bit nice, and besides, you never saw those little girls. They may be lots of fun."

Mrs. Mitten brushed Tom's fur until it shone, and then, going to the closet, took out his best red velvet suit.

"It's too tight," cried Tom, as he struggled into it, "and the collar tickles me. I hope all the buttons burst off, then I can't wear it." But the buttons were sewn on fast and tight. Mrs. Mitten sewed them on herself.

"Now, my dear," said his mother, after she had looked him over carefully, "no one could look finer. I'm sure your aunt and cousins will be delighted with you; that is, if you





don't forget your manners. Be gentle with the little girls and walk up nice and straight on your hind-legs and keep your clothes clean. You may go out on the porch now and wait for them while I make the muffins."





While poor Thomas was thinking of all the things he would like to do, but could not in such uncomfortable clothes, he fell asleep, and dreamt about little girls who cried because they got their hands dirty, and ran screaming into the house when a bee alighted on the flowers they were gathering.





He had not been sleeping very long, however, when he was awakened by voices near the garden gate.

“That must be the company,” he thought. “I guess I’ll just pretend to be asleep, keeping just the littlest bit of one eye open to see what is going on.”





Tom's mother, who had heard the voices too, came running out of the house at that moment.

"My dear sister," said she, "how delighted I am to see you,—and here are the twins,—how beautiful they are. They are just like you, my dear."

"Thomas, come meet your aunt and cousins."





Thomas, remembering what his mother had told him, came forward with his very best company manners.

“What a fine manly little fellow he is,” said his aunt. “Dorothea and Angelina shake hands with your little cousin Thomas. When I last saw him I had no idea he would grow so handsome; with such grace and manners. He must come to visit us in the city.”





"Suppose, Thomas," said Mrs. Mitten, "you take your little cousins for a walk in the garden. Show them the flowers,—and perhaps you could find some cat-nip."

"Catnip! Catnip!" cried the little girls, dancing around and clapping their hands—

"Catnip Tea—Catnip Tea,  
Very good for you and me,"

then each taking hold of one of Thomas' hands, they started down the garden walk.





Thomas began to think that it might be lots of fun to have company after all, if only he did not have to wear velvet suits and starched collars and cuffs.

“Don’t go near the duck-pond,” called his mother after them, but they were too much interested in other things to hear her.





Tom was telling his cousins about a young robin's nest he had been watching all summer, and the fun he had chasing yellow butterflies down in the meadow, and about the lightning bugs that flew around after dark. To all these things the little girls listened very eagerly.

"I never saw a robin's nest," said Dorothea.





“Never saw a robin’s nest?” repeated Tom.

“No! We never did,” said Angelina. “You see we live in the city. Won’t you please take us to see one?”

“Well,” said Tom, “You will have to climb a tree to see it, and maybe you might tear your dresses and your mother will scold.”





"Oh fiddlesticks!", cried Angelina, "if we do I can mend them. I have my sewing bag with me. You see, mother thought it would be nice to show Aunt Mitten how nicely we can sew."

By this time they had reached the tree where the robins had built their nest early in the summer.

"This is the tree," said Tom. "You wait while I climb up to see if they are home. Then if they are, I will help you both."





Grandmother Blue-Jay had been spending the day with her daughter and grand-children and was on her way home when she saw Thomas and his cousins. Thinking they were up to some mischief she waited until he had reached the lower branches, and then with a great screeching and fluttering of wings, she jumped on his back.





She boxed his ears, and taking him by his beautifully ironed collar, shook him until he was dizzy and his collar badly torn. Then going back to where the children were peacefully sleeping, she warned her daughter to have a sharp lookout for that bad little kitten boy.

Tom climbed hastily down from the tree. Grandmother Blue-Jay had decided for him that it was not best to look for the robins that day.





He was really scared and I think he might even have cried if the little girls had not been along.

"Let's see if we can find some butterflies," said Tom. "I think that would be a lot of fun."

"But you said you would show us a robin's nest," said Dorothea.

"I know I did," said Tom, "but that old busybody, Grandmother Blue-Jay, did not treat me very kindly and I don't think you would care to meet her."





"Does she own that tree?" asked Angelina.

"No, she just thinks she does," said Tom. "We will watch until she goes home and then go up and see the robins, and maybe the baby blue-jays too."

"Let's not think any more about it," said Angelina. "Oh, there is a yellow butterfly," and off she started with a run and a jump after it.





She fell down, skinned her knee and got grass stains on her pretty little apron, but she did not mind that—it was such fun to be out in the country where they had the beautiful green fields to play in.

Where they lived in the city there were only hard stone courts, and no flowers or birds or butterflies.





"I'm tired," said Angelina, after they had been chasing the butterfly for a while. "So am I," said Dorothea, almost out of breath.

"Suppose we climb up on this stone wall and tell stories while we rest," said Tom.

So up they went—tearing their aprons and petticoats as they climbed.





Tom did not do quite as much damage to his clothes as the little girls, but he did lose so many buttons that he was compelled to take off his coat.

"Give it to me," said Angelina. "I'll sew the buttons on while we rest," and she picked up a button here and there that Thomas had lost.

"I have them all but one," said she as she carefully threaded her needle.





“Never mind that,” said Tom. “Mother will find another; besides I wish I never would wear this coat again, it is so uncomfortable. There’s no fun being dressed up, is there?”

And the girls agreed with him that they would rather just wear their little fur coats and not have to be so particular.





“Suppose you tell us a story while I sew on the buttons,” said Angelina. “I’m sure you must know lots of interesting things to tell about.”





"All right," said Tom. "Would you like to hear about Bobby Field-Mouse and the birthday cake?"

"Oh yes, that sounds fine," said Dorothea.

"Well, you see, it was this way," began Tom. "I knew where Bobby and his family lived, down in the corn-field, and I wanted to surprise mother with something for her birthday that she just loved.





“So early that morning I went down in the field and hid in the corn just back of Bobby’s house. I had only been there a little while when out came Bobby. He was going to the baker’s for a loaf of bread for breakfast. I followed him very quietly until he was a little distance away from the house, and then I pounced on him.”





"You did?", said Dorothea, her eyes as wide as they could be, "what did he say?"

"Not a word," said Thomas, "I guess he was too badly frightened to say a word, but I carried him home, and—

"Oh, look!", said Tom, grabbing each little girl by the hand, "do you see that?"

"See what?", they whispered.





“That little squirrel,” answered Tom, pointing to the little red animal running along the top of the stone wall.

“Let’s catch him and take him home for supper.”

But Mr. Squirrel, who had very sharp ears, heard them and started up the tree,—Tom and the twins after him—Tom in the lead.





In and out among the branches the little squirrel dashed, seeing a pussy cat at every turn. Finally he made one dash for his house in the hollow of the tree. Tom dashed after him, but just as he jumped, his new velvet pants caught on a branch, and he hung in the air, kicking wildly for some place to put his feet.





This so amused the twins that they laughed until the tears rolled down their cheeks.

"I don't think it very funny," said Tom, "I can't get loose. One of you will have to help me."

It was quite difficult for them to reach Tom, for they had not had much experience in climbing trees, and their dresses always got in their way.





But they finally did reach him, and both tried lifting him to loosen him from the branch,—but try as hard as they could, they did not seem to be able to help him a bit.

Finally Dorothea remembered that she had a pair of scissors in her sewing bag.

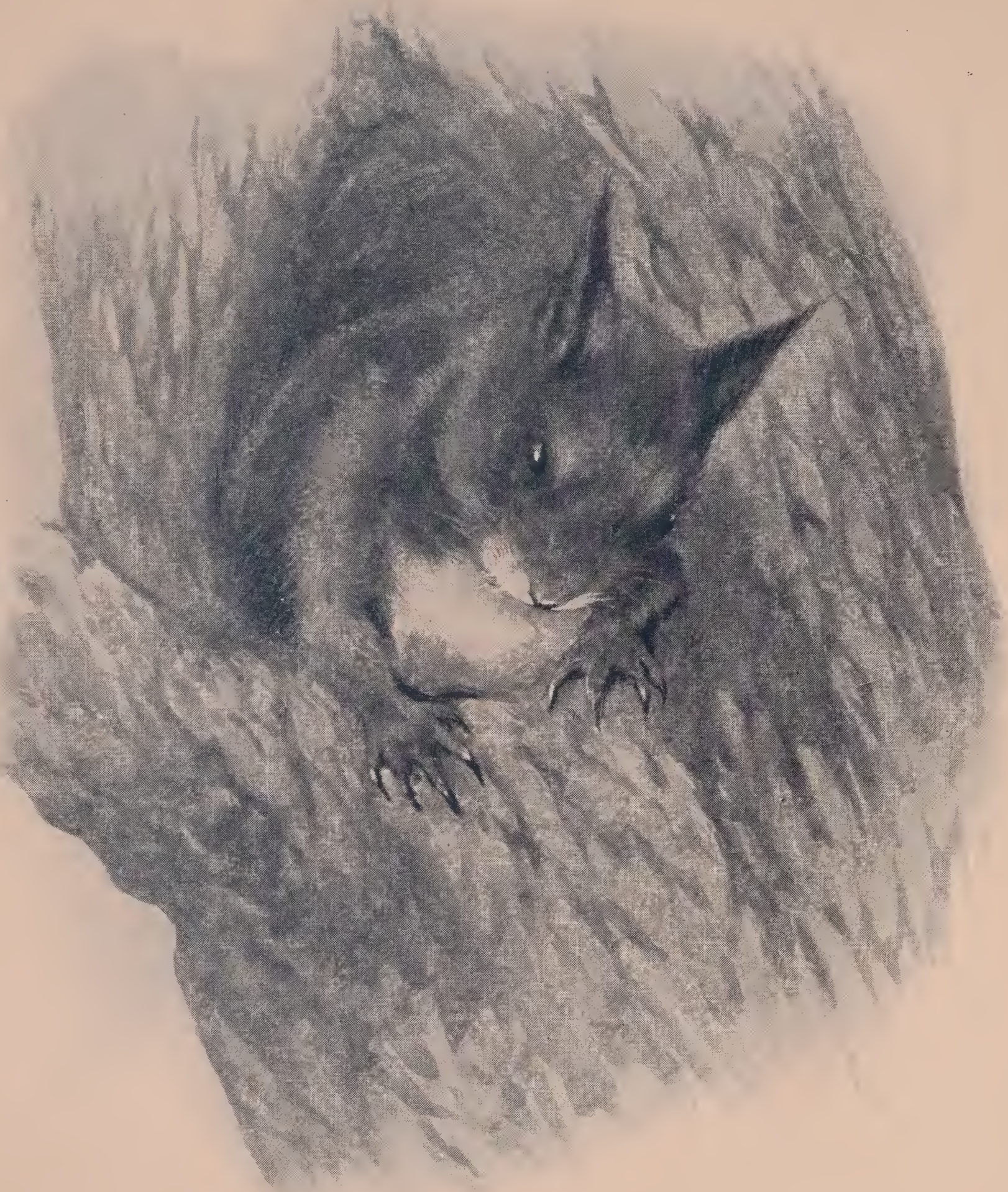
“I’ll just cut your pants a little bit,” she said, “and that will let you down.”





Snip went the scissors and bump went Tom. Of course he had prepared himself for the fall and landed on all fours, but it hurt just the same, and for a few minutes he sat there very quiet.





Mr. Squirrel sat very quiet also, inside of his door, peeping through the keyhole until he saw the twins go down from the tree and sit beside Tom to comfort him.

"Smarty! Smarty!" called Tom, looking up at him, "I'll catch you some day,—and then look out!"

"Sticks and stones!" laughed Mr. Squirrel, and darted off.





“Maybe we had better be starting for home,” said Tom, who began to feel that he had enough experiences for one day,—“besides, I think it is going to rain.”

“Oh don’t go yet. I want to see the ducks,” said Angelina.

“Oh, yes,” cried Dorothea, clapping her hands, “we must see the ducks.”

“All right,” said Tom,—“but you must not touch the little ducks, for old Jenny Dilly Duck is very, very cross.”





It was not very far to the duck-yard, and they just got nicely inside the gate, when Mrs. Dilly Duck saw and started for them. They could see by the look on her face that she was very angry, and the three kittens were very frightened indeed.





Tom and Angelina went one way and poor little Dorothea the other, with Mrs. Dilly quacking loudly at her heels.

Dorothea ran so fast that she forgot to look where she was going, until she tripped and fell with a splash headlong right into the pond.





Fortunately it was not deep, but it seemed like a long, long time to Dorothea before she finally reached the other side of the pond where she scrambled out, losing her apron in the excitement.

She did not stop long enough to even pick it up, but ran as fast as she could to the gate, where Tom and Angelina were waiting for her.





“Oh Dorothea!”, cried Angelina, throwing her arms about her sister. “I was so frightened when I saw you fall into that pond. Thomas said it wasn’t deep, but I was afraid you would drown.”

By this time it had started to rain.

“I know a good place to go,” said Tom, “until the shower is over. Old Farmer Taylor has a big umbrella on his vegetable wagon.”





“We can all get under that and keep nice and dry and warm,” said Dorothea, who was wet and cold and almost shivering.

“You can sit between Tom and me,” said Angelina, “and we will snuggle up close until the shower is over, and Tom can finish telling us his story.”





Mrs. Mitten and her sister had been so busy talking over old times since the children left, that they had not missed them until it began to rain.





“Oh, my dear,” said Mrs. Mitten, “it is raining and the children have not come back yet. I wonder where they can be? I hope they are under shelter, but perhaps we had better go look for them. I will put on this shawl and you take my raincoat.”

“Such a bother!”, said her sister Tabitha, who hated to be disturbed, “they should be spanked.”





They were not alarmed at first when they did not find them, but when Mrs. Tabitha saw Dorothea's little pinafore hanging on Mrs. Dilly Duck's clothes line, she felt sure something dreadful had happened to her darling.

"I am sure that horrid old duck woman has eaten them," she said.

"I hardly think that," said Mrs. Mitten, "but I do wish we could find them."





“We’ll try the barnyard. Maybe they have gone there to play.”

They searched everywhere—in the yard and then in the barn, in the mangers, in the hayloft, and finally, in the wagon shed. There Mrs. Tabitha found them curled up fast asleep under the umbrella in Farmer Taylor’s wagon.





“Poor tired little dears,” said she, “but whatever have they been doing? Just look at their clothes!”

“Come children, wake up and tell us where you have been,” but they were all so sleepy that she just gathered a little girl up under each arm and Mother Mitten took her tired little boy, and they all started back to the house.





"We will give them some toast and catnip tea, and put them right straight to bed," said Mother Mitten.

"And ask questions in the morning," said Mother Tab.

After the kittens were brought into the nice, warm house and given catnip tea and toast, the mother cats undressed them and put them into their soft white beds, and they were soon in Slumberland, dreaming of their adventures of the afternoon.















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